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ART AND PROGRESS

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THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

A year has passed since the American Federation of Arts was formed at a convention held in the city of Washington. Again, as this issue of *ART AND PROGRESS* comes from the press, representatives of art societies in all parts of the country will assemble at the National Capital to inquire into the present state of art among us. Twelve months ago they came together to organize a national body which should serve to unify interests and advance the cause of art in America. Now they come to learn results and give impetus to a movement still in its infancy. Those who sent out the call for the first convention were of the belief that the time was ripe for the concentration of forces—that in art as in other avenues of activity the best results could only be obtained through intelligent co-operation. Were they right? The record of the past year jus-

tifies the conviction. The American Federation of Arts now numbers, as chapters, ninety established organizations—Art Societies, Museums, University Schools, Civic Improvement Associations—and about one thousand associate members—professional artists, architects, and laymen, vitally interested in the advancement of art. Its membership is not confined to one section of the country; the chapters and associate members are scattered from California to Massachusetts, from Minnesota to Texas. Thus it has already become widely representative. A year is not long in which to accomplish large results, but the work which has been undertaken by the American Federation of Arts has met with encouraging success. Early in the fall a request was received at the office of the organization at Washington for a representative collection of American paintings, to be shown in the Public Library, of Fort Worth, Texas, all cost of transportation and insurance being guaranteed. The exhibition was assembled and sent and was most appreciatively received. It was visited by over five thousand persons and two sales were made—one a picture by Paul Dougherty which was purchased for a permanent municipal art collection. From Fort Worth these pictures were sent to New Orleans where they were exhibited by the City Art Association with good result, impetus again being given to the formation of a permanent public collection. Later, a collection similar in character was sent to St. Paul, Minneapolis, and New Ulm, in which cities it was shown under the auspices of the Minnesota State Art Society. To Meadville, Pennsylvania, twenty oil paintings by well-known contemporary artists were sent in April, and a few weeks later a collection of thirty water colors was sent for the purpose of exhibition to Henderson, North Carolina. These exhibitions have been carefully selected, and catalogued, and promptly shipped. They have undoubtedly been educational and at the same time pleasurable, the purpose being to establish a standard and create active interest in the establishment of town or

city galleries. In addition to this, the American Federation of Arts has secured typewritten, authoritative lectures on Fine Arts subjects, profusely illustrated by stereopticon slides, which it has been able to lend to small towns where lecturers could not be obtained. It has, furthermore, served as a general bureau of information directing inquiries to the right source for response and bringing into closer relationship kindred organizations, besides establishing this magazine for the purpose of diffusing valuable information. The work of the American Federation of Arts is scarcely begun—the gateway to its opportunities is but just open. It occupies a field heretofore vacant. Through traveling exhibitions, a lecture bureau, its publications, and its standing committees, it can perform service of incalculable value to the people of the nation, and to the nation as a whole. We are a commercial people and we are living in a commercial age, and our hope of salvation lies in the cultivation of the higher senses. It is no exaggeration to say that the appreciation of beauty is a safeguard to citizenship. The man who has within himself the power of enjoyment which this gives is enviably rich. It is this power alone which prevents discontent and its attendant evils. To reach the people a national organization is essential and one composed not alone of professional artists but artists and laymen. This requirement the American Federation of Arts fulfills.

THE NATIONAL GALLERY

It is strange how difficult it is for many persons to grasp the national idea—to look beyond the narrow confines of localism. Sometimes one is prone to wonder whether the English phrase "The States" is not nearer the popular conception than the more correct appellation. But it is, perhaps, the city wall that is most confining. This is to a great extent the stumbling block in the way of the rapid development of the National Gallery. It belongs not to

Washington, but to all the cities and all the States, therefore it has but lukewarm support. It can wait for appropriations from Congress while those who clamor are satisfied. Who clamors for the National Gallery? None save, perhaps, those who feel the weight of personal or official responsibility. A good beginning has been made; it will grow—"all things come to those who wait"—but meantime what a waste of opportunity! Since the National Gallery collection was put on view in the New National Museum in March it has been visited on an average by more than five hundreds persons a day, the majority of whom are tourists. These people come to Washington from all parts of the country and carry back with them definite impressions. A collection of art such as might be assembled by the Nation would be bound to exert a beneficial effect in the formation of taste, the establishment of small, worthy, provincial galleries. All credit is due those in authority who have made the utmost of the facilities afforded and opened to the people the collections donated by public-spirited citizens, setting them forth to the best advantage. But one cannot build without support. The National Gallery cannot indefinitely remain a matter of private beneficence. We are no longer an infant nation. Among the progressive nations of the world we stand foremost and yet as centuries pass we are in danger of being forgotten. "There are but two things that are permanent," said Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler once, "and these are art and ideas." We are spending lavishly—we are buying in regal fashion—but we are passing with utter disregard that thing which is priceless and which is lasting when secured. This is not the fault of the legislators, but of the people at large.

THE COST OF ART

There was something horrifying in the enormous prices paid for paintings at the Yerkes sale a few weeks ago in New York. If money is a test of art appreciation one should perhaps witness this